

9. *The Logical Structure of Dreams
and Their Relation to Reality*

Dream narratives are very often thought to be full of contradictions—for example, of shifts in identity as one thing suddenly turns out to be another—and of non sequitur leaps in continuity. These are the most basic ways of being illogical, of violating the conditions for making sense. Although, as I discuss below, a lot of dream researchers and theorists defend dream thinking as not typically violating sense in these ways, I endorse the view that dream narratives do often contain contradictions and non sequiturs. In doing so, however, I am not accusing dream narratives of the kinds of irrationality from which those theorists aim to defend them. For I propose, first, that dream narratives are nonetheless perfectly logically valid, and that they are so not despite but *in* these violations of sense. More accurately, I shall try to show that these violations are logically valid in dream narratives at least in some respects, leaving open whether there are not also ways in which these narratives are simply nonsensical. Second, I shall try to show that these violations of sense are logically valid because they accurately express the logic of certain very deep kinds of issues, and that dreams involving these otherwise illogical dimensions sometimes deal precisely with these kinds of issues. I shall argue that these issues are those of dealing not with this or that aspect of our selves, our lives, or the world but with ourselves as a whole, our lives as a whole, or with the sense of reality as a whole.

In the rest of this chapter, I refer to dreams rather than dream narratives. This may give rise to two sorts of objections. First, it is true that there are all sorts of possible problems, both epistemological and semantic, with the idea of dreams' existing independently of our reports of them. So far, however, this debate is far from concluded, and reference to dreams

themselves is still certainly defensible.¹ In any event, it does not affect my claims or argument here if we replace “dreams” with “dream narratives.” If dream reporters can identify with or become caught up in the attitudes and feelings articulated in the narratives they present, then what I have to say about dreams applies just as well to those narratives of dreams. (This has the result that narratives of other kinds, like artistic fictions or even other people’s dream reports, can have exactly the same status for these purposes as a person’s own dream reports. I see no problem with that result.)² If, then, the reader is convinced that reference to dreams themselves is illegitimate or too problematic, she or he may take my use of the term “dream” as convenient shorthand for “dream report” without affecting the purport of the discussion.

The second possible objection is that, for those who are committed to the idea that logical relations characterize only collections of propositions and not the world of events and things, the claim that dreams are contradictory or contain non sequiturs is incoherent, since dreams are events or perhaps “thing”-like experiences or states. These readers too may replace the references to dreams with references to dream narratives without affecting the gist of the argument. It is not, however, clear to me that dreams are simply objective events or states, rather than consisting partly in a point of view on things. A point of view, presumably, *can* be contradictory or involve non sequiturs. Further, as I argued in the Introduction, I do not in any event believe that this very widespread view of the field of application of logic is tenable.³

My claim that there are logically valid violations of sense may give rise to another possible immediate objection, that in principle or by definition

¹See, for example, the essays responding to Norman Malcolm’s seminal book on this issue in Charles E. M. Dunlop, ed., *Philosophical Essays on Dreaming* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977). Malcolm’s book is *Dreaming* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1959).

²Calvin Hall has commented, conversely, that if we dismissed dreams because they are hallucinations, “we would have to dismiss all of the great works of art, of literature, and of music, everything in fact that has been created out of the mind of man. For dreams, too, are creative expressions of the human mind. They are the portals through which we can view the workings of the mind”; Calvin S. Hall, *The Meaning of Dreams* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), 9.

³See the Introduction, section 4.

contradictions cannot contribute to or be a form of making logical sense. But as I have noted in other chapters, this is no longer uncontroversially the case even in formal logic.⁴

I now return to my thesis. As I mentioned, I propose that this paradoxical logic of legitimate violations of sense not only characterizes dreams, it also characterizes certain very deep kinds of issues. In fact, as I shall argue, it characterizes the deepest, most meaningful dimensions of our sober waking reality. I propose that dreams involve this type of logic because they accurately express and work with the logic of those real and deepest dimensions of our lives. These are the dimensions in which, as I suggested above, we deal, not with this or that aspect of ourselves, our lives, or the world, but with ourselves as a whole, our lives as a whole, or with the sense of reality as a whole.

Currently, there are both an influential postmodern and, as I have discussed in other chapters, an influential pragmatist and neo-Wittgensteinian skepticism about the sense of the idea of “things as a whole” or “oneself as a whole,” and so of a view of things or oneself as a whole. Both schools of thought, however, also include defenders of the genuine sense of this idea, such as Thomas Nagel and Jacques Derrida.⁵ The view Derrida expresses in this connection is central (as he insists repeatedly throughout his work) to the entire project of his version of “deconstruction”: that traditional metaphysical concepts like that of the “totality of things” are essential, although they are not the last word. Consequently, Derrida’s version of postmodernism is what he calls a “double writing,” always *both* a “most faithful” reading “inside” the metaphysical tradition *and* a reading “outside” it.⁶ On the sense of an idea of “things as a whole” or “oneself as a whole” specifically in connection with dreams, see, for example, Bert States, who writes, “my dream . . . is the pulse and direction of my existence. . . . Just as a child cannot possibly detect the moment at which it became aware of the world . . . the dreamer cannot detect the beginning of his dream because

⁴Again, on the possibility of legitimate logical contradiction, see the Introduction, section 5.

⁵Thomas Nagel, “The Absurd,” in *Mortal Questions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 11–23; for example, Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 6.

⁶Derrida, *Positions*, 6.

for that interval the dream is all of his consciousness that exists. The dream is the center and the horizon of his world.”⁷ Another dream theorist, Eugene Gendlin, points out that we may have a need “to grow *as a whole*” when it is not enough to “keep trying to fix only the situation.”⁸ J. J. Valberg focuses specifically on this dimension of dreaming, and actually uses the all-embracing “horizon” of dreams to demonstrate the necessity of the idea of a view of the world or one’s life as a whole.⁹

Taking the idea of a view of “things as a whole” as legitimate, then, the kind of situation in which we deal with ourselves or our lives as a whole arises when, for example, we grow in an overall way, our entire sense of ourselves becoming transformed, or when we lose our sense of ourselves. And we deal with our sense of reality as a whole when, for example, we encounter, in other people or cultures or subcultures, ideas about reality that do not fit with our sense of what reality can include. (I should note that the fact that ideas that do not make sense in our terms belong to a different culture or subculture does not automatically make them valid. They may in fact be simply and absolutely nonsense. But an encounter even with mistaken ideas about reality that do not fit with our own overall ways of making sense can produce, by their contrast with our sense of reality, an awareness of that sense of reality in general, or as a whole.)

I argue, then, that dreams express and work with the logic of gaining a sense of and a relation to ourselves, our lives, or our sense of reality as a whole. These three senses of things as a whole have in common that they are self-inclusive, or self-reflexive. For example, the sense that we might have of reality as a whole is itself included in reality as a whole: this sense is therefore, in at least some respect, partly a sense of *itself*. I shall try to show that, because of this self-inclusion, the logic of these senses of things as a

⁷Bert O. States, *The Rhetoric of Dreams* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), 85.

⁸Eugene T. Gendlin, *Let Your Body Interpret Your Dreams* (Wilmette, IL: Chiron Publications, 1986), 188, italics in original.

⁹J. J. Valberg, *Dream, Death, and the Self* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), e.g., 69–70. I am grateful to Steve de Wijze for drawing my attention to this intriguing book.

whole, in waking reality as in dreams, is validly one of contradiction and non sequitur.¹⁰

As I mentioned at the start of the chapter, there are researchers or theorists who argue that dreams are no less logical than waking life, and who show how the apparently bizarre logic of dreams can be translated into the logic of waking life. Corrado Cavallero and David Foulkes, for example, argue that “dreams are not, in general, wildly implausible, vaguely experienced, or full of nonsensical images or image sequences. They are, rather, reasonable projections of what we might expect if waking cognition were operating under the somewhat dissociated circumstances generally accompanying sleep.”¹¹ Bert States makes a similar argument from the point of view of dreams as storytelling.¹² But insofar as I do not take waking life to be always essentially describable on the basis of the criteria of standard logic, I do not think these views are necessarily incompatible with my own.¹³ I agree that dreams show the same basic logic as everyday life, but I also think that everyday life involves dimensions that are only and legitimately describable in contradictions and non sequiturs. Consequently, while dreams do share the same logic with waking life, it is partly a logic

¹⁰On the theme of the relation between self-reference and true contradiction, see Paul M. Livingston, *The Politics of Logic: Badiou, Wittgenstein, and the Consequences of Formalism* (New York: Routledge, 2012); Graham Priest, *Beyond the Limits of Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), e.g., 4.

¹¹Corrado Cavallero and David Foulkes, eds., *Dreaming as Cognition* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), 11.

¹²Bert O. States, *Dreaming and Storytelling* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), especially chapter 1.

¹³Erich Fromm argues that dreams do operate with a logic that would be bizarre in waking life, but that this logic is appropriate for the context of nonaction that goes with sleep. In that context, there are no consequences of my thoughts for what I could realistically do to or with the things I think about, so that many kinds of constraints crucial for waking thinking are irrelevant. Erich Fromm, *The Forgotten Language: An Introduction to the Understanding of Dreams, Fairy Tales, and Myths* (New York: Grove Press, 1951), 28. This view is more unambiguously in conflict with my own proposal.

Very briefly in response: since the inactivity of sleep is registered within the waking perspective, and the events of dreams mostly do not occur within that perspective (except very ambiguously in lucid dreaming, and as remembered *but no longer occurring* upon waking), it is not clear to me that the inactivity of sleep has any bearing on the logic appropriate to the activity or otherwise that occurs within dreams.

of legitimate violations of sense. In any event, I think these theorists can agree that there are at least some dreams that involve genuine contradictions and non sequiturs. With that restriction, I would be content to argue that, while many dreams may reflect the standard logic of everyday life, the illogical dreams at least sometimes or in some part express the deeper, paradoxical kind of logic that I have proposed belongs to the sense of our lives as a whole.

Even if there is real and intractable disagreement between these theorists and myself, however, I do not wish to say that they are wrong. I find their arguments persuasive and thought-provoking. I am only proposing a possible way of making sense of dreams and a possible role they play in our lives, with, I hope, enough justification to show that this proposal is worth exploring further. There is room here to explore conflicting explanatory proposals without deciding which of them is right.

I shall not explore here whether there are in fact valid methods of dream interpretation. I take it as at least arguable that some of the widely used methods (say, Freudian, Jungian, Gestalt, or Focusing methods) are valid, so that dreams possibly express something at least in *some* way meaningful for the dreamer's life. What I shall really try to show, then, is that *if* dreams can be interpreted at all, *if* they have any meaning at all, then they are logical in this paradoxical way. This assumption may of course be wrong, but it is not obviously or uncontroversially so.

In the first section, I explain why, in those waking situations that involve dealing with our lives or reality as a whole, logic, or the way sense works, must be contradictory and discontinuous. (I discuss dealing with our selves as a whole in the second section, as part of an illustration from an actual dream.) In the second section I try to show that dreams do deal with these situations. In the third section I briefly discuss how it follows from this proposal that dreams are not only expressions of a sense of our lives or reality as a whole but are at the same time dynamic transformations of our lives or our relations to reality as a whole. In other words, they are a form of what we might call existential practice. In the final section I try to show that some of the classical theories of dream interpretation offer partial or indirect support for my proposal.

1. *The Same Logic in Waking Life*

To start with an easily recognizable example, when we are depressed, everything in the world is felt in keeping with that low mood. The blue sky and sunshine are annoying because they remind me how depressed I am, they rub it in that I cannot enjoy the beautiful weather. The piece of good news brings into relief how unsatisfying everything else in my life is, and even makes me feel worse because I cannot enjoy it properly. When, on the other hand, I am in a good mood, everything in the world is felt in keeping with my cheerfulness. The gray, rainy weather makes a nice cozy contrast to the warmth inside; the bad news is a challenge to be overcome, or is only one part, not especially important, of a basically likeable world.

Now, if we want to explain how one shifts from one of these moods to another, or how one might debate the truth or value of these two views of reality, we cannot point to anything in the world. *Everything* in the world, all of reality, reality itself, is understood as miserable in the one mood and as lending to or at least not harming cheerfulness in the other. Each of these two overall senses of things includes all the same entities and events, and interprets *all* of them in opposed ways. As Wittgenstein pointed out, “the world of the happy man is a different one from that of the unhappy man”; in moving from one to the other it “becomes an altogether different world.”¹⁴ There is no way, then, to have a rational debate between these senses of reality, or to undergo a rationally motivated transformation of one into the other. *Anything* one might refer to in the debate or in motivating the change is already understood by each sense of reality to the exclusion of the other. As a result, as soon as one refers to or specifies what one means, the “debate” is already decided. The contrasting version of things one wants to justify is already excluded as senseless, as not part of the world, as unreal by definition. And there is no neutral ground that either sense of reality needs to or can acknowledge. They each already include everything, reality as a whole. There is nothing left over to be neutral ground.

But one mood *does* become transformed into another. And the person in each mood can be (and usually is) aware that the sense given by the other

¹⁴Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961), 72, prop. 6.43.

mood exists, that she or he has felt before and can feel again in ways that are not accessible to her or him at the moment. But it still remains true that the two moods grasp the *whole* of reality differently, and that there is therefore nothing left out of each sense of reality. As a result, the awareness that both moods are possible can only consist in understanding exactly the same thing—the world as a whole—in different, and in fact in mutually exclusive ways, at the same time. In other words, this awareness involves contradiction and discontinuity.

The fact of the transition itself from one mood to another is also significant here. This transition can only consist in one sense or understanding of things *itself* giving rise to an incompatible one. There is nothing left out of each sense of the world, so that one sense of reality can only give rise to the incompatible one out of itself. In other words, it itself gives rise to the sense it also excludes. In this situation, transformation too, then, involves contradiction and discontinuity.

It may be objected, and rightly, that standpoints that grasp the whole of reality differently in this way cannot conflict with each other and therefore cannot contradict each other. Such standpoints cannot mean and so share the “same” things to disagree about. But, because I am arguing that in this kind of situation of understandings of the whole of things contradictions are both necessary and true, this point is not an objection to what I am saying but part of it. One way of expressing my proposal is that wholly mutually exclusive standpoints *both* have nothing in common at all *and* are standpoints on all the “same” things. In other words, the objection is true *and* the contradiction of it is true. (I give concrete context and support to flesh out this abstract principle below.) Wholly mutually exclusive standpoints are not about the same things and so cannot contradict each other, and yet they also are and do. As I have argued, first, since we understand the whole of everything in each of the two mutually exclusive ways, *this*, the whole of everything, is at least in some sense exactly the same thing we are understanding in each case: there is nothing left over, nothing *else*, we can be reunderstanding. Second, such standpoints do become transformed into each other: the unhappy world *itself* becomes transformed into the happy world. Again, there is nothing else, nothing left over, to undergo this transformation. It is a shift of one and the same thing into the new sense of it. Consequently, while the two standpoints cannot refer to the same things, and so cannot conflict with each other, they also can-

not but refer to the same things, and so cannot but conflict with each other.¹⁵

This metacontradiction, then, about the occurrence of contradiction in cases involving understandings of the whole of things is one expression of the type of contradiction I am defending in general here.

It may be objected even more fundamentally that it is simply not meaningful to compare two such different ways of making sense *at all*, so as to say they are in some sense interpretations of the same thing. Consequently it is literally without meaning to say that they can conflict with and so contradict each other. But if this comparison is literally without any meaning at all, it is equally meaningless to make both this objection and the argument supporting it, since their topic (the comparison) literally has no meaning. First, any substantive statement about the comparison then contains a meaningless part and so itself has no meaning. Second, an entirely meaningless “topic” has no content on whose basis to make inferences and so *justify* an objection. (For a detailed exploration of these arguments and of the implications of their outcome, see Chapter 1.)

Let me note, then, that if I am wrong about the possibility of contradiction in this kind of situation, it is not because we already know that “incommensurable” standpoints (as Thomas Kuhn influentially called them)¹⁶ cannot contradict each other. I know this too, and am insisting on it. If I am wrong about the relation between these standpoints, it is because I fail to demonstrate that this contradiction, *as well as not occurring, also, in contradiction to what we know, does occur* in this case. And that needs to be judged on the basis of the discussion supporting it in this section, not on the basis of preconceptions about what can be said on this issue that miss or fail to engage with the point this discussion defends. In fact, even

¹⁵For additional discussion of the possibility of incommensurable frameworks’ referring to the same thing, see section 6 of Chapter 3 and the first section of Chapter 8. See also Alasdair MacIntyre, whom I quoted on this topic in Chapter 1: “each community, using its own criteria of *sameness* and *difference*, recognizes that it is one and the same subject matter about which they are advancing their claim; incommensurability and incompatibility are not incompatible”; Alasdair MacIntyre, “Relativism, Power, and Philosophy,” in *Relativism: Interpretation and Confrontation*, ed. Michael Krausz (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 190.

¹⁶Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

if these presuppositions were relevant, I have already given explicit reason to question them in the discussion of contradiction above; there is no justification for taking them for granted here.

To move from moods to the world of ideas and developed knowledge, it is a familiar argument in philosophy of science, in political philosophy, and in treatments of disagreements between whole philosophical systems that conflicting understandings of what reality itself is, of what reality can include, cannot rationally debate with each other on this issue.¹⁷ These kinds of understandings or frameworks do not only see this or that piece of reality differently but see reality *itself and in general* differently. Consequently, as with moods, anything they might point to, in order to resolve the debate, is already understood differently in the other framework. More specifically, it is understood in the context of the other framework's sense of what reality can include, so that each piece of evidence already depends on the decision about reality that the debate is supposed to decide.

One cannot appeal either to the broad rules of logic or sensemaking to decide between the frameworks. These rules can only work with meanings as they are given to them, and here the meanings are exactly what are in conflict, exactly what need to be decided. And, in any event, the rules of sensemaking themselves can differ between very different frameworks of the sense of things.

For example, in debates between evolutionists and creationists, evolutionists tend to have a view of reality as consisting in matter and energy, and of the reality outside our bodies as having basically reliable connec-

¹⁷In philosophy of science, see, for example, Paul Feyerabend, *Against Method*, 3rd ed. (London: Verso, 1993), especially chapter 16; Kuhn, *Structure*; Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough*, trans. A. C. Miles (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1979). In political philosophy, see, for example, Jean-François Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988); Alasdair C. MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988); Charles Taylor, *Philosophical Papers, Volume 2: Philosophy and the Human Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), esp. chapters 3–5. With respect to philosophical systems, see, for example, Robin George Collingwood, *An Essay on Metaphysics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940); Everett W. Hall, *Philosophical Systems: A Categorical Analysis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960); Henry W. Johnstone, Jr., *Validity and Rhetoric in Philosophical Argument: An Outlook in Transition* (University Park, PA: Dialogue Press of Man and World, 1978), e.g., 114.

tions with our senses. Creationists, by contrast, tend to have a view of reality as including divine revelation and spiritual dimensions, in comparison with which our senses and independent human reasoning are entirely fallible. Now, it is logically impossible for scientific method to prove that there is matter and energy, since the sensory observations that are essential to its method *depend* on there being a material world that can make them *sensory observations at all* (rather than, say, self-produced dream images). And it is logically impossible for revelation to prove the spiritual world exists, since it *depends* on the reality of that world to give it any meaning as *revelation* in the first place (rather than, say, a result of chemical imbalance).

But whether or not either or both of these views is true, we are capable of understanding both. And, as in the case of understanding the possibility of conflicting moods, this means we understand *exactly the same thing*—the world as a whole or in general—in mutually exclusive ways at the same time. Further, we are rationally *required* to gain an understanding of both views (assuming both are at least intelligible by their own criteria): we cannot decide which is true without entertaining both of them. Consequently, at least one phase of rational thinking about these issues requires us to think about the same things in mutually exclusive ways at the same time. Again, then, this is a necessary kind of awareness that involves contradiction and discontinuity.

In fact, as I have discussed in several of the other chapters, one cannot have even *one* understanding of or perspective on reality as a whole without automatically also having the idea of possible contrasting alternatives.¹⁸ The idea that reality as a whole is to be understood one way implies a contrast with other possible ways of understanding it, ways that it rejects. Otherwise the “one way” is not distinguished from any other, and so has no particular content. And since these are contrasting ways of understanding the sense of things *as a whole*, they are mutually exclusive. Any single perspective on reality as a whole, then, implies a contrasting perspective that it wholly excludes. Consequently, even a single perspective on or sense

¹⁸ Donald Davidson, “On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme,” in *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984). As I have discussed in earlier chapters, Davidson takes this point in the opposite direction from mine. I return to this below.

of reality as a whole necessarily involves logical contradictions to or discontinuities with itself.

These kinds of situation are not simply a matter of entertaining conflicting possibilities about the same thing. In that case there would be no contradiction, since possibilities, by definition, do not assert themselves as the unique state of affairs: they make room for conflicting alternatives. Here, however, in the context of perspectives on reality as a whole, there is no sense to the ideas either of an actual thing or its possibilities apart from each interpretation. As a result, in each case we are understanding the thing *with* all its possibilities—in fact, everything that might be meant by that thing—in mutually exclusive ways. We are understanding the “same” thing simultaneously in ways that exclude each other even as *possible* ways of understanding “it.” Or, to put the same point differently, because reality itself, as a whole, is what is differently understood in these two frameworks, with nothing left out in each case, each interpretation of reality *is* the unique state of affairs, allowing no meaning to the idea of conflicting alternatives.¹⁹

The idea that such different understandings of reality are really possible has often been challenged, perhaps most powerfully by Donald Davidson and Richard Rorty, whose work in this connection I discussed in Chapter 1. Apart from my own response to their views, the debate is still running strongly, so there is at least that much warrant for continuing to explore the idea that such different frameworks *are* possible. But in the context of the issues my presentation has raised in this chapter, I would like to add a brief comment to my discussion in the first and in some of the later chapters.

Very roughly, Davidson’s argument is that it is self-contradictory to claim to conceive contrasting understandings of reality as a whole, since

¹⁹For descriptions and accounts of the detailed structure of the partly nonsensical (or, as I have described it here, contradictory and involving non sequiturs) relation between different perspectives on reality as a whole, or of the process of shifting from one to another, see Chapters 4 (especially the last few pages, on Wilde’s *Dorian Gray*) and 8, and also Jeremy Barris, “The Convergent Conceptions of Being in Mainstream Analytic and Postmodern Continental Philosophy,” *Metaphilosophy* 43, no. 5 (2012): 592–618; *The Crane’s Walk: Plato, Pluralism, and the Inconstancy of Truth* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009); *Paradox and the Possibility of Knowledge: The Example of Psychoanalysis* (Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press, 2003).

any conception *we* have can by definition only occur within *our* understanding of reality as a whole—and this includes conceptions of contrasting understandings of reality as a whole. I acknowledge that this is a quick and very roughly approximate description of his view, and as a result, any conclusions I draw from responding to it can only be very provisional and tentative. It is the kind of objection, however, that other theorists raise, and that it is natural to raise against a proposal that endorses contradiction. My response is therefore worth making even if it ultimately misses Davidson's own point.

Clearly, this kind of objection is ultimately based on the principle that logical contradiction is always unacceptable. In that light, any idea that leads to endorsing logical contradiction, as the idea of such different frameworks does, must have something wrong with it. But, as I have noted, the exclusive principle of noncontradiction cannot be taken for granted in this way. And as I have argued, this principle is not, itself, something that can be defended by the kind of logic that endorses it: that kind of logical argument *depends* on it. This principle is one of the standards for sensemaking on which it relies in order to *produce* its arguments, including its justifications of the principle itself.

In other words, the exclusive principle of noncontradiction is part of just another one of those ways of understanding the sense of reality as a whole and in general, that cannot rationally debate with contrasting frameworks. This principle on its own, then, cannot justify rejecting a framework that is based on accepting some kinds of contradiction. And since the argument that we need such a framework is partly based, as I hope I have illustrated, on implications of noncontradictory sensemaking itself, there is reason for adherents (or, more accurately, inhabitants) of the non-contradiction framework to make room for the legitimacy of at least exploring the viability of the some-contradiction framework.

Now, assuming that different understandings of reality itself are possible, or even that one can have a single understanding of reality as a whole (and as I have argued, these come to the same thing), engaging with such understandings is not just a matter of intellectual vision. Since the self that is doing this understanding is part of reality as a whole, if this self understands reality as a whole in a certain way, then it automatically understands its own reality in a certain way. And since a self *is* partly an awareness (this is still the self *as a whole* that is partly an awareness: while it may also

partly be other things, it would not be a self at all without that awareness) and therefore partly is its understanding, it then also *exists*, as a whole, partly in that certain way in which it understands itself. Now, as I have argued, an understanding of reality as a whole necessarily involves contradictions (in fact, contradictory understandings of reality). Consequently, the self that has this kind of understanding automatically also understands itself, and so exists, as a whole, in a way that involves contradictions. (This is also and more obviously true, of course, if the conflicted understanding is of the self's life as a whole, rather than of reality in general as a whole.) That is, the sense of itself as a whole, and so it as a whole, is automatically caught up in the contradiction.

2. *The Logical Structure of Dreams*

I shall now try to show that dreams express and work with this kind of situation of dealing with our selves, our lives, or reality as a whole. If this is true, then at least part of their contradictory and non sequitur character expresses the legitimate logic of some kinds of real situations.

Like different moods or different global understandings of reality in relation to one other, dreams and waking life deal with *all the same* particular events and entities as each other, and consequently grasp them differently only as a whole. The old problem raised by skeptics, of how we can know whether we are dreaming or awake, is very hard if not impossible to answer, exactly because we can take everything in waking life to be equally part of a dream.²⁰ And when we are dreaming, we can and often do take everything in our dreams as waking reality. In other words, *no part* of dream life establishes that it is different from waking reality, and vice versa. If we want to pinpoint what makes dreams different, then, we need to look at dream life and waking life with respect to their sense of the whole of things. And this means that dreams do involve a sense of the whole of things.

Even some of the kinds of logical impossibilities that are commonly taken to be parts of dream life that distinguish it from waking reality are,

²⁰ Valberg rejects this version of dream skepticism but defends an alternative version that still results in the view that dreams involve a different sense of the world as a whole from that of waking life. Valberg, *Dream*, 105–108.

as I have argued, also found in waking life. (Whether or not they express the *same* situations as those in waking life is a separate issue, which I am only now in the process of discussing.) And Medard Boss, as I discuss in the final section, argues that *all* the apparent oddities of dreams are equally present in waking life.²¹

But even without these arguments, it is clear that dreams need not, and often do not, contain any oddities of sense at all, and yet (at least as we think of them on waking) would still be radically different from waking life. As a result, even if the presence of illogic *could* establish that they are dreams, their dream character is independent of it. There is still no particular part of dream life, then, that explains its difference from waking life. The difference must lie in the sense it makes of things as a whole.

Perhaps this is a way of understanding Fechner's description, made famous by Freud, of dreams as occurring in a "different scene of action."²² There is no other setting or place beyond the settings or places in waking life: if there were, it would be just another place included among the places in waking life. But dream settings are clearly not locatable in the waking world of places. And dreams deal with all the same events and entities that we find in the waking world. As a result, the setting of dreams can only be the *same whole* world of settings and places as the waking world, experienced differently.

In principle, then, dreams must be understood to be another view or experience of reality as a *whole*, or of a life as a whole.

But let me give a concrete illustration of this kind of sense of a whole, and of its contradictory and non sequitur logic, in this case *within* an actual dream of my own. One of the paradoxes inherent in the contradictory and non sequitur character of a relation to the whole of things is that one can engage with the whole even while still in many ways being within it. As I argued in the previous section, even a perspective on a single "whole of things" involves logical discontinuities with itself. Differently expressed, the sense of the whole involves something like its being outside itself. That is,

²¹For example, Medard Boss, *The Analysis of Dreams*, trans. Arnold J. Pomerans (London: Rider, 1957).

²²Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. James Strachey (Harmondsworth: Penguin Freud, 1953), 112.

since it is outside *itself*, its very inside is outside itself. Consequently, one can engage with the whole even while still in many ways within it.

Equally, one can and consequently, when one engages with them, does engage in the same paradoxical way with limited wholes within the greater whole, each having its own integrity as a whole because it is logically discontinuous in the relevant respects with the rest of the whole.²³

Here, the dream involves the case I have not discussed very much so far, the self's relation to itself as a whole. I dreamed that someone was sneering at me, being confidently judgmental. I became angry in the dream, and successfully rejected the appropriateness of his attitude. When I woke, I realized that I was angry with myself for a recent failure that was a result of circumstances beyond my control, and that the dream was expressing my feelings in the context of this situation.

It is not important for our purposes here whether or not this particular interpretation is accurate. It is a kind of interpretation that is often made of dream images and events, and, on the assumption that there are valid ways of interpreting dreams, it is therefore enough to illustrate the logic that typically belongs to them.

If the combination of the person who is judging and the person who is judged expresses my being angry with myself, then each person expresses myself. And if it expresses my self, it expresses my whole self. It is not, in this case, that part of myself is angry with another part of myself, but that I am angry with my *self*—that is, with my self as a whole. Otherwise there is no reflexive, self-referring anger but instead the *different* case of one part

²³ A distinct conceptual or semantic area constitutes a limited whole in this sense. The concept constitutes or frames the whole of the sense of its content, of that semantic area. This is evident in that grasping the concept means acquiring something new and unique, and to describe its content entirely in terms of other concepts is to engage in conceptual confusion, or category mistakes. The shift from understanding something in terms of one conceptual order to understanding it in terms of another, then, shares the same violations of logical sense as a shift from one comprehensive framework to another. (Conversely, both also share the violations of sense belonging to category mistakes.) As a result, gaining a new perspective on an element of one's life, where that perspective involves acquiring a new concept, is a passage partly consisting in these violations of sense. I suggest that these partly nonsensical transitions are often part of what happens in dreams, as in waking life. See note 19 above for references to accounts of the detailed structure of these kinds of passages.

of a person's being angry with another part, or of one person's being angry with another, separate person. But where the dream figures express my actually being angry with *myself*, they express one and the same thing—my self as a whole—as two different things, two different ones of myself as a whole.

And, as I shall try to show, they do so rightly. They express a situation in which one and the same thing really also *is*, in the same respects, two different things.

Now, it is certainly possible for a part of the self to be angry with other, different parts of the self. One could, for example, be angry with oneself only for a specific issue, and then be angry with oneself only for feeling that anger. In these cases there is no self-including conflict (one is not angry with the very anger one is feeling right then and there) to give rise to contradictions or incompatible identities. But these are not the cases we are dealing with. It is still possible to be angry with *oneself*, and not just with specific aspects of oneself. And my proposal is that it is *those* kinds of situation that make sense of the contradictions and incompatible identities we find in dreams.

That, on this interpretation of the dream as being about anger with myself, it is right to understand the dream figures as in some sense fully expressing the whole self in each of the two selves can also be seen by reflecting on the logic of the possible interactions between the two persons in the dream. If, for example, I had quailed in the face of the judging person's rejection, I would have been enacting the substance of that very rejection. To give a parallel, if I condemn myself, and accept the validity of the condemnation (for example, I feel bad because of it), both the condemnation and the acceptance of it are the same act of condemnation. They are both *my* attitude, and they are both the *same* attitude, and they are about the *same* subject, myself. They are, then, simply different expressions of one and the same thing. In this case, since it is *my* act of rejecting *my same self*, and equally *my* quailing in the face of *my same self*, my quailing is my *carrying out* of that *same* rejection: my quailing is continuous with and expresses that very same act of rejection.

Similarly, if I as the judged self had rejected or condemned the judging self as a whole for condemning me (rather than just rejecting its condemnatory attitude), then my rejected or condemned self would have been again, or still, rejecting or condemning *itself*. It would have been carrying

out the very activity of condemnation of itself that it was reacting to in the “other” person. This activity would not just have been the same *as* the other’s, it would have been *one and the same* activity.

This continuity between the different expressions of the same self as a whole applies in waking life as well as in dreams: the same examples and arguments I have just given apply equally in both contexts. But because of this real continuity between the expressions of the self, there is a real contradiction—again, in waking life as well as in this kind of dream—when a self is in conflict with itself as a whole. For example, the attitude of rejecting or condemning the worthiness of the self as a whole is itself included in the self as a whole, that is, what it rejects includes itself, so that the attitude rejects its own worthiness to reject. And for the same reasons of self-inclusion or self-continuity, a self that is in conflict with itself as a whole is rightly understood contradictorily as one and the same thing that is also two different things. Each side of the conflict includes the whole, and as a result leaves nothing out to be another “thing.” And yet, since it is a conflict, there *are two sides* to it, *each* consisting in the one and only “thing.” Here, then, we have logically necessary—that is, valid—contradictions, of exactly the kind that dreams express.

Now, in resolving the situation in which a self rejects itself, it cannot accept itself as a whole if it rejects its self-rejection, since its self-rejecting attitude is part of itself. Consequently, if it is to resolve the situation, it must shift to self-acceptance without rejecting its self-rejection. What is more, since it is rejecting itself as a whole, it excludes self-acceptance altogether. For both reasons, it must therefore shift to an understanding of itself the possible sense of which its current understanding entirely excludes. And here we have a logically necessary moment of non sequitur, expressing the logic of real situations in which we do in fact shift our attitudes toward ourselves as wholes (just as our moods do in fact change).

There is another relevant side to this kind of resolution. In achieving that shift to acceptance, the self must accept all of itself; and this, as I have noted, includes accepting its rejection of itself (to achieve acceptance of itself). The non sequitur, then, also involves another kind of contradiction.

In fact, a week later I had a dream in which I was appreciatively delighted by someone’s silliness. Here, if this dream expressed self-acceptance (and, again, this is a typical kind of interpretation, and in that way is enough

to illustrate the point), the accepting self judged the accepted self as silly, a judgment that is a form of rejection, or is at least in some sense negative. But I was appreciatively *delighted* by that silliness. And, following the sometimes contradictory logic of a self as a whole, since I was accepting *myself*, that is, myself as a whole, which includes the various attitudes of the accepting self, I was accepting my act of negative judgment too. I was accepting myself together with my silliness *and* my judging myself as silly.

At least part of the contradictory and non sequitur logic of dreams, then, is a valid expression, enactment, and reworking of our sense of ourselves as a whole, or, as the first part of this section argued, of our sense of reality as a whole.

In the next section I explain why I use the language here of “enactment” and “working.”

3. *Dreams as Simultaneously Expression and Transformation*

In this section, I shall try to show that if my proposal is right so far, it follows that dreams are not only expressions or reflections of a sense of our lives or reality as a whole, but are at the same time dynamic transformations of the sense of our lives or of our relations to reality as a whole. In other words, they are a form of what we might call existential practice.

As I argued at the end of the first section, if different understandings of reality as a whole are possible, then, since the self that is doing the understanding is part of reality as a whole, if this self understands reality in contradictory or otherwise conflicting ways then it automatically understands *itself*, as a whole, in contradictory or otherwise conflicting ways. (This is also and more obviously true, of course, if the understanding is of the self's life as a whole, rather than of reality in general as a whole.) That is, the sense of itself as a whole, and so *it* as a whole, is automatically caught up in the contradiction or conflict. This in turn automatically means that this self is actively engaged, as a whole, in challenging the sense or meaning of its own nature and in the struggle of that challenge. In other words, this kind of understanding is in itself an active *unsettling and resettling*, a *reworking*, of the sense and nature of the self that is doing the understanding. This reworking consists, for example, either in a transformation of the self or in gaining a fresh relation to itself as its old self.

In fact, as I have argued, even a *single* awareness of things as a whole automatically involves awareness of alternative views that it also entirely excludes, and so engages the person, as a whole, in a contradiction, in an unsettling and reworking of her or his sense of things. Differently put, registering our existing sense of things *as* a particular sense of things, rather than as just a perception of how things simply are, is already an unsettling of it. Even if we then come to accept our existing sense of things as the right one again, we now hold it with a deeper perspective on it. There is transformation of one's standpoint even if its substantial content remains entirely unchanged.

If dreams also involve this kind of understanding, they too are not simply passive ways of seeing, of being a spectator to, these challenges to and transformations of our sense of ourselves or of things as a whole. They are also active *processes of establishing* or *enactments* of this reworking understanding and its logic; they are acts and processes of unsettling and reworking the dreamer's self as a whole or her or his relation to the sense of reality as a whole. That is, they are in themselves transformations of ourselves or of our relations to the sense of reality as a whole.

If my proposal is right, then, dreams, whatever else they may be, are ways of asking and dealing with what are sometimes called existential questions. And this means that dreams are in themselves a practice of philosophy. They establish and express insight into the sense that our lives as a whole have or existence as a whole has for us. And in achieving that insight, they are in themselves an activity, a practice, of orienting, situating, or resituating ourselves in our relation to our lives or to existence as a whole.²⁴

As Harold Alderman writes, "The dream . . . is one horizon through which the dreamer comes more securely—or insecurely—into the presence of his world. To interpret a dream is to act as a Socratic midwife,

²⁴I explore philosophy or deep thought as at once both enactment or activity of being and straightforward, stable descriptive statement (in the way of the coordination of sometimes always true alternatives whose logic I discuss in this book) at length in *The Crane's Walk*, esp. part 1, idea 2, but also throughout. Chapter 7 of the present book, which deals with a fundamental limitation of Heidegger's conception of truth as enactment of being, also offers a detailed account of a closely related version of this coordination of conflicting alternatives in the course of pursuing its own focus.

assisting at the birth of the dream and at the re-birth of the dreamer's world."²⁵

4. *Partial and Indirect Support in Some Classical Theories of Dream Interpretation*

That dreams have this kind of logical structure finds partial and sometimes indirect support in some of the well-known theories of dream interpretation.

In Freud's framework, the dream as we experience it, with its mixture of sense and nonsense, consists in what he calls the manifest dream thoughts. But these are a compromise between perfectly intelligible latent dream thoughts and perfectly intelligible waking thoughts that exclude or censor the latent ones (or that exclude the entirely intelligible unconscious wishes that the latent thoughts express or with which they engage). "Two separate functions may be distinguished . . . during the construction of a dream: the production of the dream-thoughts, and their transformation into the content of the dream. The dream-thoughts are entirely rational. . . . On the other hand, the . . . product, the dream, has above all to evade the censorship."²⁶ The censorship is our commitment to blocking away from our awareness what our waking thinking or attitude regards as unacceptable. The irrationality of dreams, then, is the result of combining incompatible ways of making sense of or evaluating the same things.

The conflicting ways of making sense in Freud's framework, however, are not necessarily ways of understanding reality or oneself as a whole. In the cases he discusses, consciousness generally rejects a particular idea of a piece of reality for reasons that emerge from its particular experiences. This rejection of particular things is contingent. It could have been otherwise: it is not part of or a result of the ultimate sense of things—that is, the sense of things as a whole—itself. As a result, there is no *logical* necessity (that is, no necessity following from the very sense of the ideas involved) to its incompatibility with the latent thoughts or unconscious wishes, and so no logical necessity to the resulting incoherence.

²⁵Harold Alderman, "The Dreamer and the World," in *On Dreaming: An Encounter with Medard Boss*, ed. Charles E. Scott (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1977), 118.

²⁶Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 649–50.

Freud's model, then, only partly coincides with my proposal. But it does support the view that the illogic of dreams is really a combination of two (or perhaps more) logical sets of ideas, rather than simply having no connection with coherence at all. And for the rest, the particular focus of the censorship, and Freud's procedures and model for working with it, are not incompatible with the framework I am suggesting. There is no difficulty understanding the two types of conflict, global and particular, between modes of thought as simply different dimensions of dreams, neither interfering with the occurrence of the other.²⁷

Jung, by contrast, does see dreams as most deeply expressing and working toward the coherence of the self as a whole. "The ego-conscious personality is only a part of the whole man, and its life does not yet represent his total life."²⁸ Through the analysis of dreams there is a process of "assimilation of unconscious contents" that "finally reaches completion in the restoration of the total personality."²⁹

On the other hand, he does not see dreams as ultimately structured as or expressing a contradiction in the dreamer's sense of things. (This is not the case for some more recent Jungians; I discuss their work briefly below.) It is true that for Jung the total personality includes a balance of contradictory opposites, including a balance between rationality and irrationality. Development of any one side of one's personality will necessarily be accompanied at another level by the development of its opposite.³⁰ But, first, these opposites are included in the same "total personality," making up its opposite poles. As a result, the contradiction is contained within a bigger picture, and so is not a contradiction of or in the ultimate sense of things. Second—and, really, another expression of the same issue—there is a balance *between* "rationality" and "irrationality," and not an "irratio-

²⁷In *Paradox and the Possibility of Knowledge*, however, I argue that Freud's (and also Jacques Lacan's reconceived Freudian) procedure, if not the models and content he derives from it, works rigorously in keeping with the logic of interaction between conflicting ways of understanding reality or oneself as a whole that I explore here.

²⁸Carl G. Jung, *Dreams*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974), 78.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 108.

³⁰Carl G. Jung, *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology*, 2nd ed., trans. R. F. C. Hull (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1953), 71.

nality” of “rationality” itself.³¹ Finally, Jung’s idea of balance here is not that of a balance between conflicting understandings of the whole of things but between different dimensions of what he takes to be the one and only whole. As a result, while his approach involves the self as a whole in relation to reality as a whole, it really does not properly raise the issue of the sense of the whole but takes for granted the exclusive validity of one particular construal of that sense, which it then explores.

His theory does, however, give a kind of indirect or implicit support to the view that dreams express an ultimate contradiction in consciousness. There is a central element of incoherence or contradiction in his theory, though as far as I know not recognized as such by Jung or, often, by Jungians, that flows necessarily from the idea that dreams engage with a sense of the self as a whole. That the self has to *achieve* the wholeness of *itself* means that it is not yet itself. That is, it is not yet what it is: it does not coincide with itself. And this is a contradiction. (I should clarify that in my view we *can* meaningfully speak of achieving and of not yet having achieved “the whole of ourselves,” so that this is what I have been arguing is a valid contradiction: but it is still a contradiction.)

This contradiction emerges in his theory in a variety of ways. For example, the self communicates the achieved sense of its wholeness to itself, in the form of motifs like the mandala image, and it does so prior to achieving that sense of its wholeness. Jung describes these motifs as “‘images of the goal,’ as it were, which the psychic process, being goal-directed, apparently sets up of its own accord, without any external stimulus.”³² And in his framework the self *must* communicate with itself in this way, so that it can know to move toward itself, and know that it is genuinely itself that it is moving toward. In other words, it knows, and must know, where to go and what it is before it (the “itself” it is communicating with) knows where to go and what it is.

Jung does point out that the self communicates this sense of itself to a part that is artificially separated from it, the persona, or the fragment of ourselves that we falsely identify with as our self. There is therefore no real contradiction: the whole communicates to a part of itself, which need not coincide with or know everything in the whole. But it is also Jung’s

³¹Ibid., 71.

³²Jung, *Dreams*, 295.

view that the whole is the real thing, from which the persona arises as only a *fake* separate entity, one that we take, “altogether wrongly, for something individual.”³³ And this view is *necessary* to his framework, since the goal is to work toward the wholeness of the parts: the self is the wholeness or self of the *persona*. If this were not so, the persona could not find and would have no need to find its own completion in the self. This means that the whole is *necessarily* the *true reality* of the persona, which therefore necessarily has no genuinely separate reality. But if the whole is the only real thing, the contradiction reemerges in a different way. The self *itself* has produced a part of itself that is discontinuous with and not privy to itself. This is equivalent to going about hiding something in a place one does not know about.³⁴

My own proposal might help to articulate and explore the validity of this contradiction implicit in Jung’s framework. But it would also result in undermining the nature of classical Jungian dream therapy. The goal of that kind of therapy is to be guided by the coherent sense of the self that awaits and unfolds. “The archetype is, so to speak, an ‘eternal’ presence,” that “only *appear[s]* more and more distinctly and in increasingly differentiated form.”³⁵ On the view that there is a real and central contradiction in what dreams express, however, this coherent sense of the self is necessarily capable of being understood in contradictory ways. That is, that particular sense of the self is necessarily only one among conflicting senses of the self as a whole, none established in advance as more legitimate or more real than the others. The goal of dream analysis would then be to hold in suspense and balance the contradictory senses of self in order to find out, after the fact, which one turns out to be (or, perhaps better, turns out to have been) the self’s commitment. The persona, for example, might need to be reunderstood as possibly one of the alternative, legitimate senses of the self in its full reality and in all its wholeness. And all the archetypal motifs might need to be reunderstood as signifying and enacting points of decision, or phases of decision, between different and potentially

³³Jung, *Two Essays*, 276.

³⁴On the contradictions in Jung and their reemergence, see also Ludwig Binswanger, “Dream and Existence,” in *Being-in-the-World: Selected Papers of Ludwig Binswanger*, trans. Jacob Needleman (Riverdale, NY: Baen Books, 1963), 246.

³⁵Jung, *Dreams*, 295.

equally legitimate understandings of oneself or of reality, rather than as signposts to or communications from the pregiven, right understanding of oneself or reality. (Although *after* one has made the decision or found out who one is, and so, as it may then be right to say, who one has always been, it is perhaps or sometimes true to say, for example, that the archetypal motifs were signposts to the pregiven right understanding.)

Differently expressed, where Jung takes individuation into selfhood to be the solution to the problem of our relation to ourselves and to existence as a whole, I take it to be a first, more or less complete articulation of the problem. To put the kind of contradiction I have discussed differently, in the process of settling our relation to ourselves and to existence as a whole, we stand outside the whole of which we are part. In the case of our relation to ourselves, achieving our identity with a previously unknown self would be the kind of thing that would allow us to recognize, by contrast, the contradiction or incoherence in our previously *not* having achieved that identity, *not* having been what we have always been. It would allow us to see that part of the nature of being a self is that it is possible for us not to be what we are, and, for that matter, that in some ways we also have been or are actually not what we are. This is an element of incoherence that eludes settled understanding and that only properly *emerges* in establishing one's selfhood or, analogously, one's sense of the whole of things.

As I mentioned above, there are some more recent Jungian analysts and theorists who do see the psyche, and therefore its dreams, as ultimately structured by contradiction, and these views consequently give explicit support to my proposal, at least in this respect. Stanton Marlan, for example, discusses a number of such recent writers who argue that, even though the Jungian Self is thought of as a wholeness that balances all opposites, the same principle of balance requires that there be a balance to balance and wholeness themselves: a "No-Self" that is "both complementary and antagonistic to Jung's idea of the Self."³⁶ Among others, Marlan cites Jungian analyst Niel Micklem as emphasizing "the importance of paradox rather than unity," and quotes Micklem's explanation: "When we talk of paradox, we mean the presence of any two conflicting truths present at

³⁶Stanton Marlan, *The Black Sun: The Alchemy and Art of Darkness* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2005), 182.

the same time in consciousness.”³⁷ Similarly, Marlan notes James Hillman’s insistence that the genuine Jungian unity of opposites includes “incommensurabilities” and consequently “is more like an absurd pun or the joy of a joke than the bliss of opposites transcended.”³⁸

Medard Boss, in his phenomenological framework for understanding dreams, maintains as I do that dreams reflect and engage the deep structures that constitute the sense of our life or our world as a whole. “Man when dreaming, no less than when awake, always exists in his relationships with things and with people,” relationships that “go to make up his entire existence,”³⁹ and that express “the total and original essence of things as such.”⁴⁰

Phenomenology aims to describe the structures of our experience as we live it, without arbitrarily giving one dimension of it or any particular basis for explanation greater weight or validity than another. For example, when we feel close to someone who is physically far away, that person is *both* physically far *and* emotionally close, and neither needs to be the truer or more basic state of affairs, or the one in terms of which the other is explained. Consequently, if we dream, for instance, that a person who was far away is suddenly next to us, this is not a distortion of the nature or truth of distance but an accurate expression of one dimension of its reality: we suddenly feel close to that person.⁴¹

Boss notes the varied kinds of sense that phenomenological description identifies as structuring our world, and argues that our dream experiences consist in this *variety* of sense structures, rather than in senselessness. And because these are the structures that give the senses of our world, that is, that constitute its meanings, phenomenological (or, as Boss calls it, existential) analysis, as it occurs through dream interpretation, can lead to “a new and true relationship with the essence of all things.”⁴²

³⁷Ibid., 150, 151. The quotation is from Niel Micklem, “I Am Not Myself: A Paradox,” in *Jung’s Concept of the Self: Its Relevance Today*, ed. Niel Micklem (London: BAP Monographs, 1990), 8–9.

³⁸Marlan, *Black Sun*, 155. The discussion he cites is in, for example, James Hillman, “Silver and the White Earth, Part Two,” *Spring* (1981): 21–63.

³⁹Boss, *Analysis of Dreams*, 122.

⁴⁰Ibid., 101.

⁴¹Ibid., 88–89.

⁴²Ibid., 121.

On the other hand, Boss does not account for the contradictory and non sequitur features of dreams. In fact, he denies that they have these features, since dreams share the deepest sensemaking structures of waking life. The logic of dreams only appears mysterious, in his view, because these structures are “possibly hidden in daily life,” so that we may not initially recognize their sense when dreams force them on our attention.⁴³ But as I have argued, the waking awareness of “the total and original essence of things as such,” which he argues dreams share, is itself necessarily and legitimately contradictory and logically discontinuous.

And while Boss does see dreams as expressing the structure of our sense of reality as a whole, he focuses only on their expression of particular dimensions of that structure, rather than on their expression of the sense of the whole of things simply and in its own right. These two kinds of focus, however, are at least not incompatible. There is no difficulty in understanding them as just giving insight into different, and in fact closely related, dimensions of dreams.

Still, in this respect my proposal is closer to Ludwig Binswanger’s understanding of the existential analysis of dreams. In his view, for example, “the dream . . . is nothing other than a particular mode of human existence in general,” and “our whole existence moves within the meaning matrix” of the dream.⁴⁴ Binswanger, however, is like Boss in seeing no need to account for the contradictory character of dreams. And while he does see dreams as involving conflict, it is a conflict between the sense of things as a whole and a *lack* of that sense,⁴⁵ and not between alternative senses of the whole of things. Consequently, his view allows only a limited variety of ways for the details of dreams to be significant (as Boss also

⁴³Ibid., 89.

⁴⁴Binswanger, “Dream and Existence,” 227, 223. Heidegger, however, criticizes Binswanger for carrying out his analysis in a way that, roughly speaking, does not in fact step outside its own presuppositions and so does not really involve a sense of existence as a whole. Martin Heidegger, *Zollikon Seminars: Protocols—Conversations—Letters*, ed. Medard Boss, trans. Franz Mayr and Richard Askay (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2001), e.g., 188–92. I think Heidegger is in important ways clearly right; but see also my comments on the necessary limitations of Heidegger’s interpretation of metaphysical thought in Chapter 7.

⁴⁵Binswanger, “Dream and Existence,” 247.

points out, in a different connection).⁴⁶ For Binswanger, there is only one sense of things as a whole that dreams can express, and they only express it in the form of a contrast with the lack of that kind of sense.

In conclusion, I propose that we need to acknowledge and account for the distinctly nonstandard kind of logic found in dreams, and that we need to do so not simply to identify and work with what characterizes dreams but to identify and work with their significance for waking reality.

⁴⁶Boss, *Analysis of Dreams*, 82–83.